AFRIKAANS AND PENNSYLVANISH

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Dr. Klosz writes of the phenomenal growth of Afrikaans, from an obscure Holland Dutch dialect, into what is now the leading tongue of an immense commonwealth, and infers that there is no reason why our own dialect should not also become an important language. —No German scholar has given more profound and ardent effort to the investigation of our dialect and our culture than the writer of this article. He suggests that our dialect be called "Pennsylvanish" analagous with "Afrikaans," but the terms "Pennsylvania German" and Pennsylvania Dutch" are no doubt too firmly rooted to permit of a third.—Ed.

The seventies of the nineteenth century witnessed important events in the linguistic history of the Pennsylvania Germans. A definite attempt was made to lift the speech of eastern Pennsylvania upon a higher plane and to make it the vehicle of serious thought and literary expression. There were men who believed that the cause of High German in the state was lost, foreseeing, however, that the inherited German dialect would live on for many generations to come. They resented the idea of seeing their people handicapped by the lack of any mental training in the mother tongue. Such a man was E. H. Rauch, who in 1873 founded a bi-lingual monthly "The Pennsylvania Dutchman," in which the dialect was for the first time used for ordinary literary prose. The publication in book-form, during this period, of Harbaugh's exquisite poems, added another incentive to the suddenly growing pride of the ancestral speech. The beginnings of the new movement may be traced back to the year 1868 when Rauch, over the pen-name of Pit Schwefflebrenner, published a small selection of dialect letters which had appeared in his magazine "Father Abraham." In the following year Wollenweber published a volume of prose tales in the dialect, and Rachel Bahn brought out a volume of poetry which contained, among a majority of English poems, a sprinkling of productions in the vernacular. But it is to the seventies that we have to look for a more serious, though not very systematic, effort. A. R. Horne, the second principal of the newly established Normal School at Kutztown, Pa., strongly advocated the use of Pennsylvania German in the primary grades, though not to the exclusion of High German, the cultivation of which he emphatically fostered at the Normal School. It was but logical that he should bring out, in 1875, a Pennsylvania German school-book which went through four editions. Four years later it was supplemented, but not superceded, by a handbook of the dialect by Rauch, destined for grown-up readers rather than for children and class-rooms.

Horne's line of argument was laid down at some length in an article of his published in Rauch's "Pennsylvania Dutchman," (No. 3, 1873), from which I shall quote a few paragraphs:

"The Pennsylvania Germans speak a language just as really as the High German or the English, though it is sometimes called Dutch and "Kauderwelsch" by the ignorant and prejudiced. Martin Luther chose the Misnian (Meissener) dialect spoken in Saxony, the softest of all, for the translation of the Bible, and it has since become the basis of the modern literary High German. It does not follow, however, from this circumstance, that Pennsylvania German is not also a language. As to its construction, it is simpler and less involved, its words shorter and hence more fluent than High German. It flows easy and naturally, so that it is the easiest thing in the world on the part of the Pennsylvania Germans to talk whilst High German is rather precise and cumbrous. They have probably preserved words and constructions not known in High German."

Horne then quotes Prof. Stahr as saying: "High German bears us along with the stately step of the soldier in close ranks . . . whilst Pennsylvania German allows the freedom of the route step and thus puts us more at ease."

Horne proceeds to discuss the future educational course of the public schools. Hitherto, two thirds of the Pennsylvania German pupils failed to acquire a sufficient knowledge of English in the public schools. Hence it follows that the mother tongue must be used as an intermediary. He realizes that there are many European Germans in cities like Philadelphia, Erie, Pittsburgh, Scranton, Williamsport, etc., and he coins the formula: "Pennsylvania German for Pennsylvania German pupils and High German for European German pupils is perhaps best at first. The Pennsylvania German can be made introductory to the High German. As such it can be used and taught with advantage, where pupils are accustomed to speak that language. Oral expressions, articles written in pure Pennsylvania German in newspapers, and especially Harbaugh's poems can be employed in teaching pronunciation, translation, construction and simple grammatical forms."

As to the usefulness of Pennsylvania German if employed in the teaching of High German, Horne argues:

"That the Pennsylvania German is a great help to those who desire to study the High German is known to every one who is familiar with the two forms of language. Those who understand and pronounce Pennsylvania German will find no difficulty in studying and understanding the High German. The Pennsylvania Germans make but a few mistakes in terminations and with the exception of two or three words always give the corrent gender . . . Pennsylvania Germans rarely make a mistake in applying the article . . . We would by no means therefore disparage the Pennsylvania German but employ it as the handmaiden in acquiring High German." Rauch's views were even more radical in that he did not like the High German at all—for the reason probably that he did not fully master it himself.

It is during the same period that the program of the Grange was done into Pennsylvanish, and that many newspapers in Eastern Pennsylvania, English as well as German ones, opened their columns to regular contributions in Pennsylvanish. When the Pennsylvania German Society was established in 1891, a considerable minority among the founders took a stand for having the Society set up chiefly for the dialect's sake. In this they failed and it seems that this defeat was the deathblow for a movement which was never bold enough to take on the shape of a separate organization with sharply defined aims. We gain some insight into the futile efforts of the seventes to have the status of Pennsylvansh improved from the hostile echo uttered by a prominent Pennsylvania German leader, Geo. F. Baer. In an address, given at Myerstown in 1875 he said:

". . . As for Pennsylvania German it is a mere dialect, the patois of the Palatinate, with a sprinkling of English words. It is a mere vulgar delusion to suppose that it can be elevated to the dignity of a language, capable of being taught and used in writing, as a medium of expressing thoughts. It can never become a written language. It has never been used except in conversation. The Pennsylvania Germans would not for one moment tolerate its use in the pulpit. Think of the German in Luther's translation of the Bible, or in those grand old chorals and hymns being changed to Pennsylvania German, and read and sung in church, and that, too, in this age! It is impossible to create a literature in Pennsylvania German." Why should Baer have thus spoken if there were no opponents holding contrary views? Everyone, by the way, who has even the slightest knowledge of the religious and linguistic conditions prevailing formerly among certain Pennsylvania German sects as for instance the United Brethren in Christ, the Evangelical Association and the Winebrenner Church, will admit that Pennsylvanish was often used in their sermons, being quite capable of serving as the vehicle of religious thought sincere and simple.

While this movement to bring Pennsylvanish to a more exalted position slowly faded out without ever having taken on a definite shape and consciousness, a similar and simultaneous development went through with far better success in South Africa.

The starting point was practically the same. As 1683 marks the beginning of Pennsylvania German history, so does 1652 for the Boers of South Africa. It was then that the first Dutch settlement was founded. Gradually the Dutch spread out, covering finally what today is called the Cape-Province. After this Province fell into the hands of the English (in 1795) many Boers went northward, founding independent Republics, which in their turn became English only by the terrible Boer War (1899-1902), which re-united the Boers of the Cap-Province and of the North under the British flag.

While the literary language of the Boers as the South African Dutch men came soon to be called, was the standard Holland Dutch, they used among themselves a speech strangely different from Bible Dutch. Afrikaans,—so the dialect was christened in the 19th Century—is marked by a strong tendency toward word-contraction, which is far more outspoken than even in English.

Thus, we have in:

High German	Wagen
English	wain (archaic and poetic)
Afrikaans	wa

or

High German	Wetter
English	Weather
Afrikaans	weer

or again

High German	ich sollte
English	I should
Afrikaans	ek sou

and

High German	haben
English	to have
Afrikaans	he

English "in front of" is in High German 'gegenueber.'

Holland Dutch	tegenover
Afrikaans	teenoor

In many instances Afrikaans closely resembles English; we find seil (sail), plant (plant), rib (rib), re-en (rain), water (water) hael (hail) as against High German Segel, Pflanze, Rippe, Regen, Wasser, Hagel.

Quite often, too, German and Afrikaans have a word in common as against English, especially where the latter has borrowed a root from the French or Latin, as for instance: Eng. money, Ger. Geld, Afrikaans, geld; Eng. mirror, Ger. Spiegel, Afrikaans, spie-el; Eng. joy, Ger. Freude, Afrikaans vreugde. Afrikaans has been compared to the landscape where it sprang up, "its clipped monosyllabic word-form resembles the stunted vegetation of the Karoo, its metaphors are crops from the veld, its idioms the produce of the farm" (Barnouw). Syntax and grammar of Afrikaans are extremely simplified. In this respect, too, English has been surpassed. The Afrikaans verb has "is" for all persons and numbers. Furthermore "we are" is rendered by "ons is" (lit. us is) nouns are often employed as adjectives in such expressions as "ek is honger" (I am hungry), or as verbs in an expression as "ons koeel," which may mean either "our ball" or "we shoot," according to the context. These few hints must suffice for the moment. Broadly speaking we may term Afrikaans a Low German language, contracted and simplified toward the direction, and far beyond the present status, of English.

In the Cape Province, literary Dutch gave way to English after 1795, but the spoken dialect held its place. About 1870, the decay of Dutch was obvious in the Cape Province. Since Afrikaans was not a written and English not a spoken tongue among the Cape-Boers, the question narrowed itself down to whether English would replace Afrikaans as a spoken tongue or whether Afrikaans should fill the place left free by Dutch in the realm of letters.

The latter solution seemed sheer nonsense. There were no books nor periodicals in the vernacular. It did not even have a distinct name of its own. Most people believed in the thesis advanced by the early philologists of South Africa (though rejected by present-day scientific opinion) that just as many whites in the south of the United States can speak Negro-English besides Standard English and just as many poor whites in Southern Louisiana have adopted Negro-French or Creole, so the Boers learned their new speech-forms from the coloured people among whom they lived and who used a kind of broken Dutch; they consequently called the dialect Hottentotten-Hollandsch (Dutch of the Hottentotts). Those who had preserved for their mother tongue some attachment, though ashamed of it and apologetic, were content to call it Kaap-Hollandsch (Cape-Dutch), a word-formation very similar to Pennsylvania German.

In 1875 a number of young Boers from the Western Cape Province met at Paarl and founded the "Society of true Afrikaners" (Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners), i. e. Africa-born whites. In 1876 they established a monthly in the dialect which soon won 3000 subscribers, and published a first Afrikaans schoolbook. In 1877 they sent out the first history of South Africa, written in Afrikaans, and in 1878 the first Afrikaans almanac, which within three years soared up to a circulation of 6000. However, most of the early writers used pen-names, since the adherents of the new idea were exposed to attacks, to slander and abuse from all quarters. "Most Afrikaners," their monthly sadly remarked in 1876, "will not believe that they have a language of their own. The old ones cling to Holland Dutch and the young ones have taken a fancy to English." Yet the movement made rapid headway and at the time of the Anglo-Boer War Afrikaans had gained a firm foothold in the realms of poetry, fiction, education and history.

The Anglo-Boer War crushed the Boers politically but brought to them a new consciousness of kind and an exaltation which required an adequate tool. A new wave of nationalistic and linguistic enthusiasm arose among them, this time in order to conquer for the young upstart every field of human activity and self-expression hitherto left uncovered, especially the applied sciences and public life. During that time a Pennsylvania German, Mr. Charles W. Super, voiced his misgivings in H. W. Kriebel's monthly "The Penn Germania," as follows: "In the very nature of the case all these efforts are destined to failure. The history of all languages is evidence that unless there underlies them a literature they cannot maintain themselves permanently. The Boers who desire to keep abreast of the knowledge of the times, or to famliarize themselves with the literature of their ancestors, are compelled to learn the Dutch as written in Holland. No information of any kind except what is purely local can be obtained through the medium of the Cape Dutch. It has no value for education or for mental development. Whenever a writer or speaker wishes to get beyond the limited range of local experiences with what he has to say he must employ either the Dutch proper or the English. Similar efforts have been made by a few enthusiasts to give a measure of dignity to the Pennsylvania German. But when they wish to discuss anything except the every day affairs of rural life they have to resort to the New High German and to the use of words which persons with no education would not understand. A language must grow from within; it cannot be cultivated by mere conscious effort like a plant. .... There is something almost miraculous in the progress of the English tongue. In Shakespeare's time, that is, when the colonies began their existence in the northern portions of the United States, there were not six million persons who spoke his language; at present there are not far from one hundred and fifty millions. Wherever English has obtained a foothold it has displaced all other languages." (The Penn Germania, Jan. 1913, pp. 42-43.)

But the author just quoted was entirely mistaken. A number of new magazines in Afrikaans cropped up. In 1909 an Academy for the systematic cultivation of Afrikaans was founded. In 1914 it was embodied in the law of the land that Afrikaans might be used as a medium of instruction in the public schools. Soon the church bodies admitted it as an official language of the pulpit. In 1918 the University of Bloemfontein set up the first university chair for Afrikaans, other universities followed, before long it became a medium of university teaching also, and today the University of Stellenbosch is 100% Afrikaans, while several others are part Afrikaans. There are today chairs for Afrikaans in Oxford (England), Amsterdam (Holland) and Berlin (Germany). In 1925 Afrikaans became one of the official languages of the Dominion of South Africa, and in 1932 the whole Bible was printed in the new tongue. We thus witness the most astonishing rise which a language has ever experienced. A hundred years ago the despised tongue of a group of people less numerous than the Pennsylvania Germans, it is today the recognized and leading tongue of an immense commonwealth.

Their cultural secession from the realm of Anglo-Saxondom did not imply for the Boers a political separation from the British Empire nor any rigid cultural seclusion. They took over from the British whatever they deemed useful. They are for the most part bi-lingual, having full access to the literary treasures of the Anglo-Saxons without aping them, and without foregoing their cultural identity. Their most successful journalist, Mr. J. Viljoen, is a graduate of the School of Journalism of Columbia University, who by introducing American methods of editing and of circulation management brought the sale of his weekly "Die Huisgenoot" up to 40.000, not a small fraction among only one and one tenth million Boers. For the Boers are by no means very numerous. There were but 25,000 white Dutchmen in Africa in 1795, as against more than 130,000 so-called Dutchmen in Pennsylvania, and I have little doubt that even in the seventies of the last century, when the future status and—in the long run—the very existence of the two idioms was at stake, the "Dutch-speakers" were more numerous in Pennsylvania than in South Africa.

Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the Boers is the degree to which they have permeated and enriched the cultural atmosphere of their English-speaking countrymen. All state officials of British descent and almost the whole British intelligentsia speak Afrikaans. Their English betrays the Boerish neighborhood; a farmer up country is called a "platteland-farmer"; to harness a team of horses is "to inspan", a popular English weekly goes by the name of "The Outspan." Dorp is used for village, kloof for ravine, and so on. Two authors of English descent, two brothers, S. B. and G. C. Hobson, both of whom speak English in their homes, wrote their first book in Afrikaans, since it was better adapted to the South African scenery they wanted to picture, to the landscape of the "veld" than the English. The rise of Afrikaans is just as stunning, its future just as bright at the breakdown of Pennsylvania German is touching and its future gloomy. And yet the two kindred tongues were in the same situation only seventy years ago: two "have-not" dialects, who had much to gain and nothing to lose but their rather miserable existence.

Note.—The racial composition of the Boers may be roughly characterized as 55% Dutch, 30% German and 15% French Huguenot. Many of their most prominent men are and were of German stock, such men as Paul Kruger (Uncle Kruger), the President of the Transvaal Republic during the Anglo-Boer War, and Prime Minister Hertzog, the recognized leader of present day Boerish Nationalism. For additional information the reader is referred to Adrian J. Barnouw's "Language and Race Problems in South Africa" (1934). Prof. Barnouw is a native of Holland, Professor at Columbia University, who made a trip to South Africa in 1932, with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, New York.

En Gluckvoll Bieplin

"Gluck gluck! Gluck, gluck!"
Du liewer Grund!
Was bischt du doch so bees!
Eefeltich's Dier. Ich hab yo gar
Nix gege dich, Gott weess!

'S iss yetz schun eenunzwanzig Daag,
Dass d' ruhig sitzscht un fescht
Uf dreizeh Oier, weiss wie Schnee,
Dort in deim warme Nescht.

"Gluck, Gluck! Gluck, gluck!"
Du Satan du!
Nau pickscht mich in mei Daume!
Ei, hei; Nau halt!—Was weech un warm —
En ganzi Handvoll Flaume!

"Gluck, gluck! Gluck, Gluck!"—
"Biep, biep! Biep, Biep!
Ach, was is des en Lewe!
Du dummes Ding, halt's Maul! Ich will
Yo yuscht des wennich hewe.

"Gluck, gluck! Gluck, gluck!
Graak, graak! Graak, graak!
Nau halt doch mol dei Maul!
Elf Bieplin sin's—en scheeni Zahl—
Un juscht zwee Oier faul!

"Graak, graak! Gluck, gluck!
Sei net so dumm,
Un kreisch net wie die Narre.
Autsch, Dunner, autsch! eb d' widder brietscht
So fiederscht du der Parre!

"Gluck, gluck!"
Yetz pack dich in dei Schtall!
Du bischt en gudi Mudder.
Nau kratz un schaerr, un glucks un glucks,
Un ruf dei Bieplin zu der!

—DR. EZRA GRUMBINE

DER WIND

Der Wind, der blost im Land erum,
Exactly wie er will;
Ebmols iss er abscheilich rau,
Un ebmols sanft un schtill.

Er butzt die Heiser aus dem Weg,
Wie Bletter uff de Beem;
Die Mensche hen yo gaar ke Chance,
Sie fliege Haus un Heem.

Im Summer blost er sanft un weech,
Dart wu die Rose schtehe;
Mer daet net denke, 's waer der same,
Hett mir ihn net gesehe.

So gebt's aa Mensche uff der Welt,
Mer meent es kennt net sei;
Sie raase ebmols wie en Vieh,
Noh sinn sie zaart un fei.

Es kummt mer vor, mer kennt aa meh
Exschpecte vum me Mann,
As vun em Wind, der gaar nix wees,
Un aa net denke kann.

—LOUISE A. WEITZEL